1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

Appendix Three

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN SILWA

In discussing the standard of living in the village, the writer is aware that the term is essentially a relative or comparative one. Its application in such a manner is almost impossible as there is no way of comparing the present conditions of the village with those of the past or with those of the town. Certain changes in the demands of the peasants as a result of increasing contacts with town life will be discussed later; it is sufficient here to mention that the villagers, at least those who frequent the town, are aware of other standards of living to which they would like to attain. Consumption, production and human needs are sociologically relevant only in so far as they are related to a particular society. For a sociological enquiry human needs have no absolute validity independent of their cultural context and their knowledge by the members of that particular community. Beyond this any statements concerning minimum standard of living or basic needs inevitably imply a value judgment.[1]

Here the criterion to be adopted for the evaluation of the standard of living is an internal one; in other words, we are attempting to compute whether the land owned at present by the people in the village is sufficient to supply their needs as envisaged by the people themselves.

The main index for such an evaluation would be the relation between the average income and the average consumption *per capita*. The value of crops is estimated in the following computation according to 1951 prices.

The acre in winter crop produces on an average:[2]

Product	*Price per unit*[3] *in £E*	*Total*
4 ardabs of wheat ..	6	24
1 ardab of barley ..	3	3
1 ardab of beans ..	6	6
		£E33

[1] See J. E. Goldthorpe, 'An Examination of the Concept of Need', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. XLII, Section 10, 1950. Also, M. Read, *Native Standards of Living*.

[2] As a rule, for winter crop, two-thirds of the acre is sown with wheat and the rest with barley and beans. [3] The Egyptian pound is almost equivalent to the English pound.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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434
511
[041]

APPENDIX III

The summer crop is only of one kind, millet.[1]

Product		*Price per unit in £E*	*Total*
6 ardabs	..	3.50	£E 21

With every feddan a farmer can own the following animals:

1. A cow, which every two years would bring a calf worth £E6 income per year 3
2. A camel, which every three years would bring a camel worth £E6 per year 2
3. Five sheep, each bringing two lambs a year worth 30 piastres 3

Total income £E8

Thus the total income from cultivating an acre and the profits derived from animals per year amounts to .. £E61
Subtract for taxes and sowing seeds .. 1.50

Net income £E59.50

And as the *per capita* property of land is about one-third of an acre, then the *per capita* income from agriculture is about £E20. Moreover, according to the Postmaster, the village received (during the period of my field work) between £E400 and £E600 per month from those relatives who work in town, which, distributed per head, would make the total income per head £E21 per year.

511 On the other hand, it was more difficult to assess the *per capita* consumption of food and goods. The difficulty is obvious in a community which is self-sufficing in many ways, and which keeps no written records of its budgets. Expenditure, however, does not vary considerably from person to person in the village, and the following estimate will give an approximate picture.

[593] The consumption of bread has been estimated on the surest criterion which is the amount of crop that a father allows his son in his marital residence to take to his wife and children.

Winter Harvest

Two-thirds ardab of wheat for the husband
One-half ardab of wheat for the wife
One-quarter ardab of wheat for the child under seven
One-half ardab of barley for the husband
One-half ardab of barley for the wife (and chicken)
One-quarter ardab of barley for the child
One-twelfth ardab of beans per person

[262] [231] [1] Dates are not included here as they are usually consumed daily by the family. Berseem is not also included in winter crop, being consumed by animals.

APPENDIX III

		Price in £E
Average consumption is then:		
One-half ardab of wheat per head	.. ..	3
One-third ardab of barley per head	.. ..	1
One-twelfth ardab of beans per head	.. ..	1
Total	.. ..	£E5

For the Summer Crop:

Two ardabs for husband
Two ardabs for wife (and chicken and sheep)
Half ardab for child

Average consumption one and five-sixths ardabs ..	6.50
Total expenditure on bread and beans	£E11.50

Expenditure on manufactured and prepared goods:

	£E
Clothes	4
Tea and sugar ..	3
Soap, kerosene, etc. ..	1
	£E19.50

The income or expenditure does not include items such as vegetables, e.g. onions and lentils, which are grown for home consumption. Yet two main items are not inserted: tobacco and meat. Meat purchases could be offset by the sale of chickens and eggs, but certainly the use of tobacco would raise the average consumption to £E20 at least.

It will be noticed that the expenditure on tea and sugar per head is proportionately large. Tea, with plenty of sugar in it, and no milk, is the fellah's main liquid intake, as he can drink tea at any time. It is almost one of the necessities of life in the village, and neither adults nor children seem to be able to do without it. Tea is taken at home and 'lubricates the mouths' in formal and informal gatherings outside dwellings and in guest houses. Two decades ago, Ali told me that food was the attraction of such gatherings, but now tea has become the fashion. It is a disgrace to omit to offer tea to a visitor. If while serving tea, or a meal for that matter, to a guest, another visitor arrives unexpectedly, the host is obliged to make another pot of tea for him, or at least insist orally on making it, perhaps later; otherwise, the latter would feel offended and consider that he was offered 'chance-tea' (sadaf), as such an offer is not considered hospitality.

Looking at the villager's budget of £E21 income and £E21 consumption, one can appreciate the precariousness of his financial solvency; and in case of misfortune his budget could be easily upset and cause him to fall into debt, an abhorrent state of affairs. One of the fellah's maxims is that 'debt is a worry at night and a humiliation during the day'.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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APPENDIX III

In connection with the villager's consumption of food, a few remarks on meat are relevant. Meat is a rare delicacy in his diet, offered usually on festival occasions and always served with wheat bread. One can assess the amount of animal protein consumed by the quantity of meat sold on the market day, the only day, apart from festival occasions, on which the villager can eat meat. People in the village spend comparatively more on their food on market day. In the market there have been for a long time five butchers, each slaughtering on the average three sheep weighing thirty Egyptian pounds, making a total of 450 pounds. If this amount were distributed among a population of 4,450, the weekly *per capita* consumption of meat from the market would be less than one-tenth of a pound, i.e. less than five and a half pounds per year. We may add to this poultry meat, which does not exceed a number of thirty chickens for a family of five throughout the whole year. This works out at six chickens per person a year, each chicken weighing about a pound and a half. Then the total annual consumption of meat per person would be fourteen and a half pounds. This is certainly the maximum *per capita* consumption of meat, as all the chickens in the house are not eaten by its members, for some are sold to buy manufactured goods.[1]

According to the statistics of the Cairo Medical School—Kasr el-Aini—the fellah's diet mainly lacks proteins and fats, the deficiency in the former amounting to 20 per cent, and in the latter to 16 per cent.

[1] Comparable data with regard to standard of living and other points related to livelihood in Silwa could be found in the series of Chinese studies on peasant life in China. Working out such comparisons here will take us outside the frame of reference in this work. Cf. Hsiao-Tung Fei, *Peasant Life in China*, London, 1939; Martin Yang, *A Chinese Village*, London, 1948; Hsiao-Tung Fei and Chih I. Chang, *Earthbound China*, London, 1949.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

The influence of the deserts may be seen in Egyptian folk-tales, many of which tell of encounters there with *afārīt* and other supernatural beings. Secret caves in "the mountain," as the people call the steep, sometimes almost precipitous ascent to the high-desert plateau, also enter into the adventures recounted by the village story-tellers; these 'caves' are, of course, the ancient rock-hewn tomb-chapels with which the outer face of "the mountain" is in some places honeycombed (see Fig. 3).

Egypt is a land of contrasts, the marked difference between the very fertile Nile Valley and the arid, waterless deserts on either

FIG. 2. EDGE OF THE HIGH-DESERT PLATEAU, THE LOWER DESERT, AND IN THE DISTANCE THE CULTIVATION

side of it striking the eye of every visitor to the country. These physical features are, I think, reflected in the character of the peasants, for it is a remarkable fact that the most divergent traits of character can be seen in a single individual. The Egyptian peasants, in spite of much poverty and sickness, and with few amusements to break the monotony of their lives, are as a whole a wonderfully cheerful and contented people. They are very quick of comprehension, of ready wit, dearly loving a joke, even if directed against themselves, usually blessed with a retentive memory, light-hearted, kindly, and very hospitable; they are also very hard-working. At the same time they are very emotional, highly strung, most inflammable, generally very ignorant, and nearly always conspicuously lacking in self-control.

F
162 Here is a clear instance of correspondence between
241 human concentration and physical productivity. Here, more than anywhere else, irrigation and population are co-extensive.

E The number of inhabitants must have varied in the course
F of earlier ages, but definite figures will never be known.
161 However, prehistoric discoveries give early indications of
density (9). In the Pharaonic period the population probably fluctuated between seven millions, the figure given by Diodorus Siculus(10), and ten millions. The writers of Christian Egypt speak of twenty millions. At the time of the French expedition, after centuries of Arab and Turkish rule, the figure fell to some two and a half millions. Jomard, basing his estimate on the number of villages and the level of production, thinks such a figure quite normal.

Later statistics were to show, however, that it was remarkably low. An equilibrium which had been destroyed by factors other than those of geography — massacres, plague and famine (11)—was not long in re-establishing itself. As Vidal de la Blache justly remarks about Egypt, 'ancient civilisations derive a remarkable elasticity from the fact that they are based on what changes least, the productive and recuperative quality of the soil.'

E
F In point of fact, once order and public security were
161 re-established, the progressive introduction of perennial
511 irrigation and of exportable crops, by developing the possibilities of the land, necessitated a constantly growing labour force and brought about an increase of population.

E The first detailed census, in 1873, showed 5,250,000
F inhabitants. Half a century later, in 1927, the number had
161 risen to 14,217,864. In 1937 it stood at 15,904,525. This
162 population remains closely packed on the black soil upon which it depends. Ninety-three per cent. of the Egyptians, that is to say more than fifteen million souls, dwell in the basin of the Nile, which represents only a thirtieth of the whole territory. In this narrow area the towns, overcrowded and few in number, contain scarcely more than three million inhabitants. The rest of the Egyptians are countryfolk, and almost all workers on the land, fellaheen. According to official records 62% of the men of the country work in the fields. Adding to these the women and children, who must everywhere be taken into account as active workers,

At the same time the use of chemical fertilisers and the improvement of the drainage system raised the average yield per feddan. Between 1932 and 1939 the yield of all crops showed a distinct tendency to rise, only to fall again sharply in 1941, after imports of fertilisers had been drastically cut down.

Again, although the area actually cultivated averaged only 5,353,500 feddans between 1930 and 1940, there are in all 7,100,000 feddans which are classed as cultivable. The surplus of 1,750,000 feddans consists largely, no doubt, of inferior land, but if energetic measures were taken a great deal of it could be worked economically. Even should the limit be reached there still remains the Sudan. This vast and under-populated country is really an extension of Upper Egypt, which it resembles.

If present trends continue, however, these favourable factors are likely soon to be neutralised by the constant increase of the fellah population. Although the birthrate shows a tendency to fall, the gross rate of increase rose from an average of 168,000 a year between 1927 and 1937 to about 250,000 a year between 1937 and 1941.

Year	Population	Increase	Percentage Increase	Mean Annual Percentage Increase
1897	9,714,525	2,910,504	—	—
1907	11,287,359	1,572,834	16,2	1,62
1917	12,750,918	1,463,559	13,0	1,3
1927	14,217,864	1,466,946	11,5	1,25
1937	15.932,694	1,714,830	12,1	1,21

It is clear that sooner or later, if the present standard of living of the fellaheen is to be maintained, let alone raised, the problem of over-population will become acute. The palliatives we have mentioned will not suffice for long. More drastic measures will have to be taken : on the one hand the industrialisation of the country, to create a better balance between industry and agriculture and to raise the general level of production ; and on the other hand a policy of reallotment of land, permitting more intensive cultivation by smallholders, and better distribution of the products. The consideration of such remedies, however, lies beyond the scope of this book.

643 country As in all modern Governments, they are always
645 changing, and their efforts are nullified by their successors. Nevertheless, since government is extremely centralised, their signatures are needed for the merest details, which accounts for a great deal of delay. As they know the state of affairs only from official reports, their decisions in matters concerning the fellaheen are often either unsuitable or inopportune.

647 The authorities whose business it is to apply these de-
692 cisions are legion. The transmission and execution of laws, ordors, decrees, bye-laws and the like is carried out by an army of officials 200,000 strong, who for so doing absorb a third of the revenue of the State, a sum almost equal to what is furnished by the labours of the fellaheen.

647 This is no chance comparison of the author's. 'The
511 long continuance of the bureaucratic system,' said Makram
661 Ebeid Pasha, Minister of Finance, in presenting the budget for 1938 to Parliament, 'has been the chief cause of the lasting poverty of the fellah, in spite of the progress and prosperity of the country.' He proposed, in his own words, to 'put an end to this shameful state of affairs, which has turned the people into mere servants of a government machine which was intended to serve them.'

647 The overpowering weight of this machine is concentrated, for the fellah, in the hands of his *mudîr*, his *maamûr*, and his *omda*. Let us examine the scope and function of these different officials.

635 Politically, Egypt is divided into 23 sections. There are five urban areas, called governorates (*mohâfazat*). These are: Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and the Canal Area. There are four frontier-districts: the Red Sea, Sinai, the Western Desert (including the Oases of Siwa, Bahariya and Farafra) and the Southern Desert (including the Oases of Dakhla and Kharga). Last, but not least, there are 14 agricultural provinces, called mudiriyas, which cover the rest of the country.

Six of these—Beheira, Gharbiya, Dakahliya, Sharqiya, Menoufiya and Qalioubiya—each with 300,000 to 900,000 inhabitants, spread like a fan over the Delta. These six, whose names date from the Arab Period, are the most populous and best irrigated.

part *berseem*, and part wheat for the winter. The *berseem* is consumed by his cattle, the wheat produces 2½ *ardebs*, selling at about L.E. 6, but the landowner keeps back L.E. 4 of this as the second instalment of rent.

The tenant then plants his maize for the *nili* crop on his two feddans, but before the harvest he must pay the balance of his rent (L.E. 2) to the owner, and can then take the maize for himself. In fact it is only the yield of this last crop which really belongs to the fellah and his family. After setting aside enough to feed his family, he sells what is left. If all goes well he may be about L.E. 6 to the good.

But all may not go well. If the crop has been poor, or there was a blight, or the crop has been badly sold, the tenant must still pay the full rent, as provided in Article 392 of the Egyptian Civil Code. Ruin is the result. Sometimes (e.g. in the three years from 1929 to 1932) catastrophe has been so general that the Government has had to issue decrees for the reduction of rent in a proportion of 25% to 40% according to the date of contract. The State cannot always intervene, and owing to the keen demand land is rarely let except at high rents. The consequences for the fellah are frequently disastrous.

One unhappy tenant farmer, whose *gamoossa* had just been seized, explained the situation to an inquirer in these words:

"I hired two feddans at L.E. 12 apiece. On each I spent L.E. 5 in seeds, manures and so on, not to mention my labour, that of my children, and the help of my animals throughout the year. What is the result? One feddan yielded four *cantars* of cotton, which sold at L.E. 12. The other produced five *ardebs* of corn and seven of maize, which brought me L.E. 13. Out of this L.E. 25 I had already spent L.E. 10, so how could I pay my rent of L.E. 24? I had to sell the *gamoossa*."

"But if you only lose, why continue to rent land?"

"Because farming is the job I learnt from my fathers, and I don't know how to do anything else."

"But why rent land at such a high price?"

"Because the local landowners have conspired to keep the prices up, and the fellaheen do not know how to get them lowered."

427 Then he added, "Since everything we had has been taken
● 511 from us, we will steal." (32)

The Fellah as Landowner

423 We have seen that more than two million fellaheen
554 possess a patch of land each. Four fifths of this number
183 own a plot so small — from two kirats to one feddan — as not to suffice a family for either employment or support. Nevertheless among the rural proletariat these small landowners are the 'privileged class'. It is every fellah's ideal to get land, as it is to marry, have children, and own a *gamoossa*.

183 The owner of a small field has the same things to buy as
651 a tenant: seed, manure, animals and implements (these last
452 usually in partnership with others). He has no rent to pay, but is liable for taxes, and usually interest on debts. The fellah is a poor hand at finance, and rarely has any savings; he borrows money to buy seed or fertilisers, to rent a neighbouring field which will round off his patch, or even, instead of paying off his debts, to buy it.

452 Since the banks do not lend small sums, he borrows
427 from private persons, who, in spite of the 1912 Law limiting the maximum interest to 10%, lend him at 30% or even 50%. The interest, if not the debt itself, has to be paid. However hard he works, himself and all his family, in an effort to make his field produce its utmost with the least possible expenditure, he is almost always caught on the wrong leg when the payment falls due. Then he has to hand over all the fruits of his labour, or else sell part of his land.

There is a law (of December 3, 1912) which forbids seizure of the 'homestead', that is to say, five feddans or less. This law, by denying the banks any guarantee for their loans, has prevented smallholders from benefiting by the legal means of credit, and thrown them into the hands of moneylenders.

The fellah must have credit. As often as not, by his own fault, he does not know how to make his loans pay; the harsh terms engulf him deeper and deeper in debt, and the more he borrows the worse he fares. Land debts are like a cancer devouring the small landowner (33).

423 However, the fellah who owns land is, in name at least,
432 owner of its products, especially of the cotton, which the

in the village, while the *Crédit Agricole* takes it at only 150 kg. as in the cities, and advances 130 piastres (1937 prices) on each *ardeb*.

Your cunning merchant proceeds to deposit the wheat, which he pretends to have harvested, in the *shoonas* of the bank. He thus gains 10 piastres and 25 kilogrammes of wheat on each *ardeb* bought, and without assuming any risks himself can confidently expect an additional premium at the time of sale by the *Crédit Agricole*.

There are no walls but only low ridges or channels dividing the fields of Egypt. In the same way there is no sharp division between the various kinds of labour which we have just been analysing. None of these categories is self-sufficient, and each overlaps the next. There are few fellaheen who do not pass from one to another, or belong at the same time to two of them. The very conditions of the fellah's life imply a certain similarity in them all.

(1) *Poverty*. Because he knows nothing of either foresight or economy, and even more because he is weak, isolated and ignorant, the strong and the rich reap the fruits of his labours. The bank or the moneylender, the Government, the *omda*, or the landowner, gathers in most, if not all, of what he has sweated to produce. He himself, to use one of his own sayings, remains "poor as a needle, which clothes others but itself remains unclad".

(2) *Dependence*. The fellah can plant neither what he wishes nor when he wishes. As a day-labourer he works in a gang at a definite task under the strictest supervision. As tenant farmer or share-cropper he plants his crops according to the owner's plan. As landowner he is dependent with regard to dates and choice of crops on the orders of the Ministry of Agriculture. He has no sort of liberty or initiative one way or the other.

(3) *The minimum standard*. However bad his affairs may be, the fellah is at least certain of his daily bread. No-one actually starves to death in the country; for even under the worst conditions of labour the natural resources of the land remain.

(4) *Family Labour*. The help given to the fellah by his family must never be lost sight of. Among the Egyptian peasantry, wife, children, *gamoossa* and donkey make up

the cultivator's 'capital', and constitute the normal rural unit.

The head of the family works full-time on the land. His wife lends a hand at seed-time and harvest, rears poultry at home and makes butter and cheese for sale. His children look after the animals, take them to the fields or to water, gather the dung, watch the *saqia* and collect manure. For five or six weeks a year they work for wages at cotton-picking, or fighting the cotton worm, or in the ginning factory. The *gamoossa* draws the plough, turns the *saqia*, treads out the corn, and produces manure (mud soaked in urine), fuel (dung and straw), and milk. The donkey transports manure, crops, and the fellah himself.

Such a rural unit is sufficient, without any outside help, to cultivate five feddans.

Apart from his daily bread, or subsistence wage in the strictest sense, his year's work brings the fellah in at the most about L.E. 10 in cash. But his assistants are also consumers, and this money, which would otherwise be clear profit, has to be spent on such necessities as the following (pre-war prices are given):

	P.T.
Oil for the kitchen, extra vegetables, occasional meat, sugar, tea	200
Oil or petroleum for the lamp, renewal of household articles such as plates or water-pots or apparatus such as baskets, summer forage for *gamoossa* and donkey	100
A new garment (dress or *gallabiya*) for each member of the family at time of feast	150
Expenses in time of sickness or rejoicing, or for superstitious practices, pilgrimage, or fines ..	50
Unforeseen expenses	500

In the last section, which alone presents any possibility of saving, come expenses such as those for circumcisions, funerals, marriages, or dowries, or sums paid for exemption from military service. There is always one or more of these to pay for, and often enough the budget shows a deficit.

In estimating the income L.E. 10 was given as a maximum. For these expenses L.E. 10 is a minimum. That is

511 why the balance of the fellah's budget is so easily upset,
434 and that is why he is so often swamped by debts and interest.

454 If in any given year, by a stroke of good fortune, none
181 of these extraordinary expenses befall him, the fellah, hoarding piastre after piastre in a pot hidden in the earth, can at last see his dream come true, and buy a *gamoosa* or a few *kirats* of land. It is this alluring possibility, always just round the corner, which makes him continue year after year, like the soil and with the soil, the same unwearying work.

F 361 they build themselves a suburb on the outskirts of a town, as at Minia for example, it bears exactly the same appearance.

Some distinction may be made between villages according to their relative importance. There are the district capitals (*markaz*), the market towns and the centres of pilgrimage; these are big villages or townlets with more business, more movement and more institutions than the others (bank, court, police station, railway station); but no fellah centre has many of the amenities of a town. At the other end of the scale come detached but still dependent hamlets, such as the '*ezbas* of the big landowners and the Bedouin settlements (*nag'*) on the edges of the cultivation.

F 511 184 The standard of living is practically invariable everywhere, and to study an average village is to know all the rest. Let us choose a village at random and look, before we enter it, for any signs of communal life which can be seen from its outskirts.

F 361 346 In Europe it is often said that the church building gives its character to the village. In Egypt too the mosque (or the Coptic church) is the largest and most solid building, but there is nothing remarkable about it in point of architecture. Even if it has a minaret or a bell-tower, it gives no special character to the village, for it rarely rises above the poverty and mediocrity of its surroundings.

C F 779 95% of the fellaheen are Moslems. There are about a million Copts, 40,000 of whom are Catholics. They live together with the Moslems in the same villages, each group following its own faith.

F 779 771 The Moslem fellaheen, among whom neither women nor children are counted, observe as faithfully as possible the five fundamental precepts of the Koran: belief in one God, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. This much at least they know.

F 782 796 516 Of their belief in God something will be said later on. Prayers they say after ablutions in the evening, and several times on Friday. When they hear the call of the *muezzin*, they leave the women and children in the fields, and go off to the mosque, or more often to a cleared space used as such, a square of beaten earth at the water's edge surrounded by a low wall. There they pray together, or at least go through the prescribed gestures. Squatting on the ground or on

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter VII

THE FELLAH AT HOME

On his return from the East in 1932, Christian de Caters spoke as follows about the houses of the fellaheen (*Echo de Paris*, 16.6.32): "I have seen the poorest villages of a Mancha in Spain, the hovels of the Cape Verde islanders, and the reed huts of the Lundas, a savage tribe in the depths of Angola, but nowhere have I seen greater distress than in Egypt."

On the other hand, Lozach, in *Le Delta du Nil* (Cairo, 1935), finds that the fellah's home is "not far behind the stone or mud huts with a thatched roof which are still common in many parts of Central and Western Europe. It is in any case far superior to the miserable hovels in which most of the peasants of Tunisia or Algeria live".

Which statement is one to believe? It all depends on the point of view and the standard of reference. Such comparisons are in all probability misleading, especially when the cases compared are not parallel. A personal impression or opinion is not so useful as an actual description of the fellah's home, and of his life in it. This will show us how far the house is suited not merely to the fellah but also to the land he works on.

We have seen the public parts of the village. Let us look now at the private dwellings of the fellaheen, without concerning ourselves with the big house belonging to the landowner or the residence of the *'omda*.

There are certain exceptions to be noticed first: —

1. Stone houses, which are found on the edges of the desert in Upper Egypt. The nearness of the cliffs makes it possible for the fellah to transport the stones for building in his basket. Some of these houses have a vaulted or domed roof.

2. Red-brick houses, without pointing, which are quite common in Lower Egypt. These presuppose a certain standard of living.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13 ●
Egypt MR1

F 184 665 cratic forms can never have been so misleading. But that is not the worst evil, as we shall see.

E 652 439 651 The economic progress of Egypt is as striking as its political development. The country's financial prosperity is remarkable. Even before the war the State had a gold reserve of thirty million pounds, and between 1925 and 1935 it almost doubled. The budget never shows a deficit. The constant increase of revenues from the Customs and the railways, the capital of the limited companies, both foreign and Egyptian, the development of local industry (the Bank Misr companies employ 200,000 men), the place of Egyptian cotton on the world's market, the improved quality of the crops, the systematic extension of perennial irrigation and therefore of agricultural production — all these are signs of prosperity.

F 178 But this progress has resulted in no increased well-being for the fellah. His standard of life and his methods of work have remained unchanged, for all this progress was based on his labour. His ignorance and stagnation were the conditions for this capitalist prosperity.

F [248 249] 'The so-called rich crops', wrote an economist some time ago, 'that is to say cotton and sugar-cane, will not fail to influence the evolution of the fellaheen, since the one develops capital, which will effect an improvement in agriculture, and the other industry, which will sharpen the fellah's wits by the use of machinery.'

F 511 In fact, neither capital nor industry has helped the fellaheen. Both before and after the boom of 1920 their financial affairs were as bad and their poverty as great as a hundred or a thousand years ago. There are even signs, and that in official reports (70), of a lowering of the standard of living. It is the fashion to attribute this to the increase in the population, though 'Aly Shamsy Pasha also cites 'the unequal distribution of agricultural wealth' (71). In the midst of this poverty in prosperity there are still landowners whose incomes are L.E. 12,000 to L.E. 15,000 a year.

F 183 Yet here again the evil must not be exaggerated. There may be something worse than poverty — ignorance.

E 873 The intellectual revival of Egypt has been dazzling. Under the reign of Fuad I especially, learned institutions were multiplied. The Fuad I University, which did not exist twenty-five years ago, has today nearly 10,000 students,

CONCLUSION

THE DISTRESS OF THE FELLAH

In comparison with the fellah's miserable lot a century ago or under the Mamelukes, his present situation is an undoubted improvement. He can no longer be killed like a dog, plundered at will, or commandeered as a slave.

In comparison with the woes of the negro, Malagasy, Chinese, or Tonkinese peasant, the fellah might seem even more fortunate. He is undernourished but does not die of hunger. He has clothes to wear, and, when holidays come round, money to spend on amusements. [171]

True, but there are two kinds of poverty. There is physical poverty, which means insufficiency of resources and a lack of the conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of physical health; and there is intellectual and moral poverty, which means ignorance and a lack of human dignity, no less essential to the life of the spirit.

Physical poverty has a more immediate effect on the worker and, precisely because it is more noticeable, arouses more pity. Hence all these efforts to improve the fellah's house, his health, and his finances. Hence also the habitual tone of his complaints, and of the speeches made about him. "This is no new question, but a subject that has figured in every Speech from the Throne since the beginnings of our parliament. We are not suffering from a diversity of evils, each of which can be treated separately, but from a single fundamental evil, and that is the low standard of life of the masses of the people in the countryside; a standard so low that it offends all human feelings, and stains the reputation of our country. The people of Egypt is not composed of those 160 or 200 thousand persons who are comparatively well off, but of sixteen million souls" (").

In this low standard of living we must also include moral poverty, which since it affects the very sources of human life

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735 is of graver consequence for the individual than for the group. In this poverty the fellah is too rich.

181 His ignorance and backwardness, his churlishness and servility, which contrast so strikingly with the refinement of the upper classes, are more tragic than his lack of means.

The fact that he does not feel the depth of his suffering is no reason why it should seem any the less degrading. On the contrary, when he feels it more keenly and becomes fully conscious of it, his deliverance will be on the way.

184 The real evils, then, are the fellah's lack of education
212 and culture, and the incomprehension or inaptitude, if not scorn and indifference, of those who might be helping him.
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746 The greater number of official measures, for example, are thought out in offices quite remote from the fellaheen, and put into practice by officials who have nothing of the countryman in them. Whether they are concerned with health or education, agriculture or justice, they spring more from theory or from imitation of other countries than from a practical knowledge of the true state of affairs. Their starting-point is not the way of life and thought of the fellah, but a preconceived ideal. They are too interfering, and are imposed on the fellah in a hard, threatening manner. They are planted on him from outside, without ever arousing his interest or enlisting his help, so that he is unable to believe that the Government is genuinely trying to do him a service. And his distress remains the same as ever.

Here lies the explanation of the amazing series of failures which makes the pessimists say "It is no use doing anything for the fellaheen". Experience shows, however,
747 that private organisations of limited scope and resources, because they are working *with* the fellah and not merely *for* him, because they advise instead of commanding, and promise instead of threatening, have been able to gain his confidence, and in spite of unavoidable false starts have achieved excellent results.

One example is the model village of the Royal Agricultural Society, mentioned in the previous chapter. The finishing touch was put to this in December 1941 by the establishment of a 'Social Centre'.

Another case is the happy experiment tried on a large *'ezba* of 1600 feddans in Beheira, where the landowner, a